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ABSTRACT

A description of the role and status of the English language in Cameroon begins with an overview of the distribution of English speakers and the common uses of English. Subsequent sections outline (1) the use and status of English within the educational system at all levels, including teacher education; (2) the availability of English language materials and resources; (3) the structure of educational administration relating to English instruction; (4) development and planning efforts; (5) English outside the educational system; (6) British, American, and other agency support for English teaching; (7) commercial opportunities relating to the English language; (8) creative writing in English; (9) current research; and (10) other sources of information about the situation. A concluding statement notes that the educational problems affecting the system in general, such as insufficient planning, an inadequate budget, and a shortage of qualified teachers, also seriously affect English instruction, but that significant improvements have been made in the last seven years, most of them under the aegis of the British Council and the Overseas Development Administration. These improvements include additional British-trained and well motivated instructors and donated equipment and books. (MSE)

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ENGLISH TEACHING PROFILE

Country: Cameroon

Date: February 1985

1. ROLE AND STATUS OF ENGLISH

The Republic of Cameroon was created in 1972 out of the former Federal Republic which was formed, on independence in 1960, from the French and British Trust Territories. It consists of eight francophone provinces (Extrême Nord, Nord, Adamaoua, Est, Centre, Sud, Littoral and Ouest) and two anglophone provinces (South-West and North-West) which have populations of approximately six and a half million and two million respectively. Although Cameroon is officially a bilingual state, using both French and English, the relative importance of the two languages is reflected by the numerical distribution of the users. The fact, too, that the centre of government (Yaounde) and the main centre of commerce (Douala) are both in the francophone provinces means that English still plays the minor role.

In the two anglophone provinces, English is the medium of instruction in primary schools, secondary schools, the primary teacher training colleges, the secondary teacher training college and other tertiary institutions and is widely used as the official language of government and in business.

In the eight francophone provinces where French is the medium of instruction in educational institutions at all levels, English is taught in many primary schools, in all secondary schools and is used as the partial medium of instruction in some degree courses at the University of Yaounde and its regional centres. ODA are at present funding two specialists to set up a service English unit for the University.

As a result of a government decision to introduce the teaching of English into primary schools as and when materials and trained personnel became available,

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a team of British Council-recruited, ODA-funded ELT personnel has just finished producing, testing and implementing an English primary course for use in the top three years of the six-year francophone primary school course. All pupils' and teachers' books are now in the system but distribution problems are affecting the use of the final-year books. All students in the francophone primary teacher training colleges are now being taught five hours of English language improvement and five hours of methodology weekly to enable them to handle the course as class teachers. All francophone primary teacher training colleges have been following the same programme since October 1980. A decree has been issued making English compulsory for ten hours per week in schools but this is by no means universally obeyed.

Although English is little used as a means of communication in the francophone provinces and although most government officials have only a rudimentary and mainly bookish knowledge of the language, it is increasingly recognized that English, besides being one of the two official languages of the country, is of great importance as a means of international and especially inter-African communication (outside francophone Africa). Many of the more senior government officials are making a serious attempt to learn it. Many recent Presidential appointees to top-level posts are fluent in English. The use of English has spread in the francophone provinces as a result of the posting of anglophone government officials from the anglophone provinces, but their influence has not been significant linguistically. The official government policy is to make Cameroon a completely bilingual country and because of this there exists a growing desire on the part of large numbers of francophones in government to learn English, especially as many feel that it may enhance their promotion prospects. The Council has been asked to help with English classes for senior civil servants and parliamentarians.

2. ENGLISH WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

In considering the education system of Cameroon, two important factors must be borne in mind. First, there are two educational systems. In the anglophone provinces there is an English-medium system based on an inherited British tradition, and in the francophone provinces there is a French-medium system based on a French tradition. Secondly, there are very large numbers of private institutions in both the anglophone and francophone areas of the country, possibly in the ratio of two private schools to one government school in the secondary sector. These private schools vary from the long-established, educationally sound, mission schools to the purely commercial institutions, many of which have lower educational standards.

In the eight francophone provinces English is taught in many, but not all, primary schools from the fourth year of school for ten hours a week. As increasing numbers of students leave primary teacher training colleges with the ability to teach English and are posted throughout the francophone provinces, and as increasing numbers of trained francophone primary teachers capable of teaching English have been identified in the field and given appropriate in-service training - including a significant number who have been trained in Britain over the last eight years - the extent and quality of English teaching at the primary level has recently increased markedly.

In francophone secondary schools, English is taught for five hours a week for the first two years, and for three hours a week during the remaining five years. An additional optional three hours a week of English (called Anglais Renforcé) from the third year of secondary school is also possible, but so far there does not seem to have been much enthusiasm for it. There is a

special English paper in the Brevet d'Études du Premier Cycle (BEPC) taken at the end of the fourth year, but English is not a compulsory subject in the Baccalaureate, taken at the end of the seventh year, and so many pupils do not feel it is worth while spending time on a subject that will not give them a qualification of some sort.

In the two anglophone provinces, English is the medium of instruction in all educational institutions; French is taught in a small number of primary schools from the fifth year of the seven-year course and also in secondary schools. English literature appears as a separate subject in secondary schools which prepare pupils for GCE O- and A-level examinations in literature. All Form 5 pupils take the GCE O-level examination.

In the anglophone provinces, success in English plays a large part in promotion, whereas in the francophone provinces success or failure in English has only recently begun to matter. Success in English is still not required for university entrance except for entry to bilingual and English studies degree courses.

The choice of textbooks and of syllabuses is controlled centrally.

Inspection of schools is carried out under an Inspector-General of Pedagogy who is assisted by national inspectors. In the provinces, each education delegate (i.e. director of education) has a number of subject advisers for secondary level attached to his office, and in the various districts in each province there are primary school inspectors. In five of the eight francophone provinces there is a British-trained Cameroonian inspector of primary English, and in each of the two anglophone provincial capitals there is a British Council-recruited, ODA-financed English Language Teaching Adviser at present working on an in-service manual for secondary teachers.

English is taught to a limited extent in secondary technical institutions. At higher levels, though there is often timetable provision for some form of English for Special Purposes (ESP), there were no service English units until the ODA-financed English for Academic Purposes project started two years ago in Yaounde. Only two specially trained ESP lecturers exist in the whole tertiary sector.

There is a Centre Linguistique in Yaounde where a fairly small number of adults learn English and a similar Linguistics Centre in Buea, South-West Province, which intends to run courses for francophone parliamentarians, but there are no schools of English as such.

BBC English programmes are occasionally used by provincial radio stations in a haphazard fashion and the planned national television network may use British English by Television (ETV) material.

3. TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Teacher supply falls far short of filling the demand in either the government or private sectors, but private schools are much worse off than government schools in the supply and qualifications of teachers.

In the francophone provinces, approximately four-fifths of the teachers in government secondary schools are Cameroonian and one-fifth expatriate, mainly French. The ratio is approximately the same for private schools.

In the anglophone provinces, the vast majority of teachers in secondary schools are Cameroonian.

In both the anglophone and francophone provinces, staffing in primary schools is almost 100 per cent Cameroonian.

Teachers of English in government secondary schools are often graduates or holders of a teaching qualification; however, professionally unqualified teaching staff still outnumber the qualified in all subjects including English. In the private schools there are few professionally qualified staff, though many government secondary school teachers supplement their income by teaching in private schools.

Secondary school teachers of English are trained in the Écoles Normales Supérieures (ENS) at Yaounde (Centre Province) and Bambili (North-West Province). A proportion of the English teachers from ENS Yaounde spend one year at a language school in Britain as part of their training. ENS Bambili trains anglophones to be teachers of English up to O-level for the anglophone provinces but such is the shortage of teachers of English in the francophone provinces that in some years almost the entire output of teachers from Bambili has been posted to teach English in francophone secondary schools, whatever their specialist subject of study. The greatest source of supply of teachers of secondary English is, however, still the University of Yaounde Department of English which produces literature graduates untrained in TEFL, who are now encouraged to train for a year at ENS Yaounde.

In the anglophone provinces informal English teachers' associations are doing constructive in-service work assisted by the KELT officers.

4. MATERIALS SUPPORT

Since students in all institutions at all levels have to buy their own textbooks, there is often a shortage because they have no money to buy them. Very few teaching aids are available, though a few of the biggest schools have a minimum. Libraries are non-existent in primary schools, relatively few secondary schools have what might be called a library, primary teacher training colleges have few books, and the university has only a relatively small library considering its large number of students. However, this situation is slowly improving, thanks to the attractiveness of the ODA Book Presentation Programme.

In francophone secondary schools, the Today's English course, which was used almost universally for the first cycle, has been almost totally replaced by English for French-speaking Africa. The most usual second-cycle English courses to be found are Practical English (Ogundipe and Tregidgo) and Anglais en Afrique, neither of which is very appropriate.

In anglophone primary schools, Gagg's English Course for Cameroon Primary Schools is almost universally used, but it is expected that this course will be eventually replaced by a modified version of the CAMPEM (Cameroon Primary English Medium) course. In anglophone secondary schools, Practical English is the text most widely used, along with Effective English.

The Ministry of National Education is designing a new national syllabus for secondary English language and hopes that existing textbooks will be suitable and can be supplied by the publishers.

5. EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN RELATION TO ENGLISH TEACHING

Centralized Control

Cameroon operates a highly centralized system of educational administration. The posting of primary school teachers, the posting of all secondary school teachers to or within a province, the authorization and payment of teachers' salaries and disciplinary measures are all dealt with by the Ministry of National Education's headquarters in Yaounde and not by the provincial delegations for education in each province. There is a new Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research which will follow the same approach.

Ministry Organization

The Minister for National Education, who is assisted by a Vice-Minister, is responsible for all levels of general and technical education except higher education. The Secretary-General looks after teacher recruitment, teacher transfer and other general administrative matters; the fourth member of the hierarchy, the Inspector-General of Pedagogy, provides the Minister with technical and professional advice and guidance and is helped in this work by a team of national inspectors for each subject area. A recent revised organogram of the Ministry will enlarge the Inspectorate-General so that there will be three Inspectors-General, one each for primary, secondary and technical education. This has not yet been put into effect.

Regional Responsibilities

In each of the ten provinces, a provincial delegate for education, assisted by an assistant provincial delegate, heads a delegation that consists of administrative staff and departmental advisers and inspectors in each discipline and is supported in the field by a number of departmental primary inspectors and sub-inspectors. Provincial delegations for education are responsible for inspection and advice and for matters concerning school health, the organization of examinations, scholarships, education guidance and the general administration of educational establishments.

6. DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

General

Harmonization Since independence, there has been a great expansion of educational opportunity, witnessed by greatly increased enrolments at primary and secondary levels and the creation of the university. However, although the Government's eventual aim is to harmonize the two different education systems, they still remain quite separate and distinct in respect of language of instruction, structure, curriculum content and examinations. Moreover, the existence of a large number of private (as opposed to government or public) institutions at both primary and secondary levels acts as a second major constraint to effective planning and administration. In addition, the increase in enrolments at large private technical secondary schools acts as a further impediment.

Primary The primary education reform, launched in 1968 with UNDP and UNESCO assistance, aimed at harmonizing the two separate primary education systems by the introduction of a common curriculum based on an integrated inter-disciplinary approach that would contain a rural bias, instead of a subject-by-

subject approach. It ran into difficulties, since the institutions set up to develop the curriculum (the Instituts de Pédagogie Appliquée à Vocation Rurale at Yaounde in the francophone Centre Province and Buea in the anglophone South-West Province) proceeded with their programmes in quite different ways and quite independently. The proposed date for implementing the start of the reform has been postponed, but it is now expected that 1985 may see the first steps towards implementation.

Secondary Early plans for introducing new curricula into schools have not yet been implemented; indeed, development plans have only recently placed some emphasis on the need to harmonize the English-medium and French-medium systems at this level, the stress being on the reform of curriculum and harmonization at the primary level. The Centre National d'Éducation in Yaounde is responsible for the co-ordination of education research and has been working on the revision of curricula to professionalize secondary education.

English

As mentioned in section 1, it is official policy to create a bilingual nation. In practice this means that francophones should develop a working knowledge of English and anglophones of French.

This major undertaking has suffered, along with the remainder of the education system, from a lack of planning. The new organogram for the Ministry of National Education is revealing in this context: planning emerges as a low-level statistics operation. In effect the responsibility falls on the national inspectorate, i.e. there is no think tank between the Presidency and the ministerial executive. The Centre National d'Éducation has so far not been involved.

7. ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are no private commercial schools of English which properly deserve the name, though there are a few local enterprises of somewhat doubtful quality which attempt to teach English for money.

8. BRITISH SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The British Council is involved in the teaching of English language but not literature in three main ways:

(a) acting as the recruitment agency for ODA-funded contract personnel;

(b) giving administrative support to recruited contract personnel;

(c) providing professional assistance and guidance and overall control and direction to the two main projects: the anglophone secondary teachers manual project and the university English for Academic Purposes (EAP) project.

The Representative assesses the needs of the projects in terms of personnel and logistic support in conformity with the agreed country programme, provides direction, exercises overall control and assists with professional guidance in close liaison with English Language Management Department in London. The

Assistant Representative gives administrative support to personnel in the field.

The following Council-recruited, ODA-funded contract staff are at present operating in Cameroon:

Anglophone Project

Bamenda, North-West Province	- one ELT Adviser
Buea, South-West Province	- one ELT Adviser

University Project

EAP Resources Unit	- two lecturers/materials writers

A proposal for a joint British/Cameroonian textbook project for secondary English in the francophone provinces was made in 1982. The Ministry of National Education has decided the proposal is too costly and they and the Council are looking into the possibility of supporting the francophone secondary sector through in-service teacher training.

Annual English Language Teaching Seminar

The British Council, on behalf of ODA and the Ministry of Education, and the United States Cultural Centre jointly organize an annual English Language Teaching Seminar. The fifteenth seminar was held in 1984. The seminar takes place for two weeks during the summer holiday and provides the only form of in-service training of English teachers at the secondary level. Two British lecturers and two US lecturers provide a practically orientated series of lectures and workshops for 100 participants. In 1984 British publishers provided an exhibit of recent English language publications.

9. AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The United States Cultural Centre accommodates private English classes on its premises on a fee-paying basis, but the fees charged just cover the cost of the teacher and there is no definite policy to maintain or increase the amount of tuition offered.

The Peace Corps runs an English language teaching programme with ten volunteers in anglophone and francophone secondary schools.

10. OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT

The Canadian Development Agency, CIDA, is involved in a creative writing teaching project at primary level in the anglophone provinces in co-operation with the University of Guelph. The project is called the 'Association for Creative Teaching' and works through teachers' associations. There are regular visitors from the Canadian University.

The Department of African Literature at the University of Yaounde has an oral literature project also working with Guelph. A seminar on anglophone African literature is being jointly organized for early 1985. Opportunities for co-operation in literature are limited by lack of funds.

11. COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

It is unlikely, given the availability of anglophones for employment and also teaching, that commercial English language classes would cover their costs.

There are reasonable opportunities for publishers, although distribution can be a serious problem. The size of the Cameroon market would suggest publications should be of interest to francophone West and Central Africa in general, except for those aimed at the primary level where the market would encourage a Cameroon-orientated product.

12. CREATIVE WRITING

Anglophone Cameroonians are prolific writers of prose poetry, but little is published and even less is read outside the country.

Creative writing is centred around the University of Yaounde. Most authors are academics in the English Department or African Literature Department.

13. CURRENT RESEARCH

The National Centre for Education is conducting an analysis of the effects of the national policy of bilingualism on the child at school.

Most recent literary research has concentrated on the African novel and poetry and this is conducted at the University.

Libraries are seriously inadequate for research and many Council Bursaries have been awarded to assist researchers overcome this problem.

14. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

The bibliography is not yet available. It will be issued later as an appendix.

15. GENERAL STATEMENT

The problems that beset the education system as a whole - insufficient planning, an inadequate budget for teaching resources, a shortage of qualified teachers, to mention some of the more important - also seriously affect the teaching of English. However, significant improvements have been made over the last seven years, many of them with assistance from ODA and the British Council. There is now a large cadre of British trained inspectors and advisers at the primary and secondary levels who are improving the quality of the syllabuses. They are also sufficiently motivated to use their personal resources to arrange in-service courses for teachers. All teacher training colleges have received book and equipment donations from ODA and the Council, and most have been assisted by a KELT officer at some stage. In other words, the system is now better equipped to attempt to implement what has been the crucial factor since the last Profile was produced in 1979, namely the President's renewed emphasis on the importance of bilingualism.